

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05
OMB-01 TRSE-00 /064 W
-----012387 081316Z /53

O R 081153Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3728
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 9112

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DOHA'S REMARKS AND ZIA'S INTENTIONS

REF: TEHRAN 7883, (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR DOHA'S COMMENTS MIRROR INCREASED SPECULATION IN PAKISTAN THAT GENERAL ZIA MAY CHOOSE TO EXTEND HIS TERM AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. WHILE THERE ARE ARGUMENTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE AND RECOGNIZING THAT NEW FACTORS COULD ALTER ZIA'S INTENTIONS, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF A BRIEF DELAY, ZIA REMAINS COMMITTED TO OCTOBER
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ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMENTS MADE BY AMBASSADOR DOHA MIRROR INCREASED SPECULATION IN PAKISTAN THAT GENERAL ZIA MAY CHOOSE TO EXTEND HIS TENURE AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. POLITICAL OBSERVERS WHO EXPECT ZIA TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS, EITHER FOR A SHORT PERIOD OR AN EXTENDED TIME, POINT TO VARIOUS FORCES WHICH ENCOURAGE HIM TO REMAIN IN OFFICE

AND SLJBS HE MAY BE MORE INTERESTED IN DOING SO.

3. SOME SEE ZIA'S INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ASSURANCE IN HIS TELEVISED NEWS CONFERENCES AND HIS PUBLIC REMARKS AS A SIGN OF HIS INTENTION TO STAY IN POWER. ON JULY FIFTH, HE CONTENTED THAT THE ONLY AIM OF HIS INTERIM GOVERNMENT WAS TO ARRANGE FOR NEW ELECTIONS; HE HAS NOW ANNOUNCED MAJOR CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC SPHERE AND HAS INITIATED POLICIES THAT WILL NOT COME TO FRUITION UNTIL LONG AFTER OCTOBER 18.

4. OTHERS SAY RECENT POLITICAL EVENTS COMPEL A DELAY IN ELECTIONS. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW DISCLOSURE OF ASSETS LAW WOULD BE SIMPLIFIED IF MORE TIME WERE ALLOWED BEFORE ELECTIONS. THE PNA HAS ARGUED THAT BHUTTO'S TRIAL SHOULD BE COMPLETED BEFORE OCTOBER 18, BUT SOME IN THE ALLIANCE HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR WILLINGNESS TO HAVE A "SHORT DELAY" IN ELECTIONS TO ACHIEVE A VERDICT IN THE BHUTTO TRIAL.

5. THOSE WHO BELIEVE ZIA MAY POSTPONE ELECTIONS ALSO POINT TO HIS POPULARITY AS PROOF THAT THE PUBLIC WILL ACCEPT OPEN-ENDED MILITARY RULE. THEY ARGUE THAT ZIA HAS BROUGHT PEACE TO THE STREETS, IS ETHICAL AND INCORRUPTIBLE AND IS WHAT THE NATION NEEDS. FINALLY, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR MANY PAKISTANIS TO IMAGINE A MILITARY RULER VOLUNTARILY RELINQUISHING POWER. THE TRADITION HAS BEEN THE REVERSE AND THEY WONDER WHY ZIA SHOULD BE CUT FROM ANY DIFFERENT MOLD.
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6. AT THE SAME TIME, ZIA CAN SEE VARIOUS SOUND REASONS WHY INDEFINITE MILITARY RULE IS PROBABLY NOT POLITICALLY FEASIBLE IN PAKISTAN. PNA SUPPORT FOR THE MLA DEPENDS UPON THE ALLIANCE'S VIEW THAT ITS TURN TO RULE IS FAST APPROACHING, AND THE MLA IS A MEANS FOR THE PNA TO ASSUME POWER. IF THE MLA ATTEMPTED TO REMAIN IN OFFICE FOR THE LONG-TERM, PNA SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY WOULD END AND STREET DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST MARIAL LAW WOULD BE ATTEMPTED.

7. THE SIMILARITY OF POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS BETWEEN THE MLA AND THE PNA CAN ALSO ACCOUNT FOR ZIA'S INITIATION OF PROGRAMS THAT WILL TAKE MUCH LONGER THAN TWO MONTHS TO IMPLEMENT. THE ARGUMENT RUNS THAT SINE ZIA KNOWS THE PNA SUPPORTS HIS RELIGIOUS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS, HE CAN UNDERTAKE THEM CONFIDENT THAT A PNA SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE HIS POLICIES.

8. MANY POLITICAL OBSERVERS ALSO BELIEVE THAT PAKISTAN HAS BECOME SO POLITICIZED THAT THE PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION, WILL NO LONGER ACCEPT OPEN-ENDED MILITARY RULE. THEY HAVE SEEN THE FAILINGS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST, AND IF FACED WITH THE SAME SITUATION NOW WOULD EVENTUALLY

TAKE TO THE STREETS TO FORCE THE MILITARY REGIME TO STEP DOWN.
ZIA KNOWS THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE IS VERY REAL AND MUST HAVE IT
IN MIND WHEN CONSIDERING THE OPTION OF A LONG-TERM ELECTION
POSTPONEMENT.

9. THE MLA FULLY REALIZES PAKISTAN'S PRECARIOUS FINANCIAL
POSITION AND HAS GENERALLY RETURNED EMPTY-HANDED FROM APPEALS TO
ITS WEALTHY ISLAMIC BROTHERN FOR AID. ARAB DONORS ARE SAYING
THAT ONCE ELECTIONS ARE HELD, THE PURSE STRINGS WILL BE LOOSE-
NED. THIS IS A POWERFUL ARGUMENT AGAINST DELAY OF ELECTIONS,
BOTH IN TERMS OF THE NATION'S ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND THE
MILITARY'S OWN ARMS NEEDS.

10. ZIA CONTINUES TO PROTEST AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCES AND IN HIS
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SPEECHES THAT HE DOES NOT WANT TO REMAIN IN POWER BEYOND ELECT-
IONS. ALTHOUGH HIS PROTESTS MAY SOUND HOLLOW TO SOME, WE
BELIEVE IT REMAINS HIS PRESENT INTENTION TO TURN OVER AUTHORITY
TO A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IN LATE OCTOBER. THERE ARE SO MANY
VARIABLES IN THE PAKISTAN POLITICAL SITUATION THAT ANY NUMBER
COULD COMBINE TO CAUSE ZIA TO CHANGE HIS MIND. ON BALANCE,
HOWEVER, IT IS OUR VIEW THAT ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE A SHORT POST-
PONEMENT IN THE ELECTION DATE FOR BASICALLY SHORT-TERM
POLITICAL REASONS, THERE WILL NOT BE A LONG DELAY, UNLESS
DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE NEXT FIVE WEEKS CREATE A NEW SITUATION.
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